

(U) Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series

(U) Lambros D. Callimahos, Part 2

(U) The Guru, CA-400, and the Dundee Society

1. "What is the plural of Sphinx?"

(U) When I entered L. D. Callimahos' office in January 1970 to be interviewed for acceptance into CA-400, I was, to put it mildly, nervous. CA-400, The Intensive Study Program in General Cryptanalysis, was the most prestigious CA course in NSA. Just being accepted to take the course demonstrated you had arrived as a cryptanalyst. I knew little or nothing about Callimahos, but I did know that the course was 8 hours a day, 5 days a week for eighteen weeks. I also knew about eighteen people who had taken it and I knew how good they were at CA.

(U) When I sat down, I noticed a tin of Fribourg & Treyer Irish High Dry Toast snuff on his desk. I had learned to enjoy sniffing snuff when I worked with the British, and Fribourg and Treyer was my preferred brand.

(U) "Excuse me sir, before we start the interview, could you tell me where to get that brand of snuff in this country?"

(U) (He confided to me later that as of that moment, I had been accepted into the course. I was the first prospective student ever interviewed who took snuff before taking CA-400.)

2. "What instrument did Frederic Chopin's father play, and in what business was he that left him stranded in Warsaw?"

(U) There were twelve students in Class 25, ten men and two women. Callimahos started by informing us that since he occasionally used language not suitable for a lady's ears, he was declaring both women to be honorary men. Lined up neatly on each desk were a ceramic Dundee Marmalade jar containing pencils, a tin of snuff (cheap stuff, not nearly as good as F&T), cross-section paper and, as I recall, a list of required and recommended reading.

(U) The class was definitely high pressure; the sort of class where if you dropped your

pencil and bent over to pick it up, you might miss the methods of solution of two or three different cryptosystems. During the first two weeks, we went through the first two volumes of Military Cryptanalytics. (I think it was two weeks; it might have been only one.) Then we got down to the meat of the course. Working as individuals or as teams of two to twelve, we learned to solve every type of cryptosystem that was workable by hand, from monoalphabetic substitution to wired rotor devices. The only excuse for absence that was accepted was your own death.

(U) Many of the cryptosystems were those used by the government and military forces of Zendia, a fictitious country located in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Zendia was governed by a dictator, Salvo Salassio, who bore a remarkable physical resemblance to the young Lambros Demetrios Callimahos.

(U) And it was fun! The Guru and Caudillo, Callimahos, who spoke his own version of the English language, was endlessly witty and endlessly knowledgeable about cryptanalysis and a thousand other subjects. Before World War II, he had been renowned as the world's greatest concert flautist; and during the eighteen weeks he gave occasional flute concerts for the class. He was also a gourmet and a connoisseur of tea and nasal snuff. The questions scattered through this article come from the first half of the final examination, and were answered during the eighteen weeks. If we could only remember what it was he said about that! Don't worry, the second half of the final was on cryptanalysis and was far more difficult than the certification test I had already been through. But nobody ever failed. The Guru said that if you lasted out the course, you would learn something; and that was all that counted.

(U) Incidentally, Class 25 was noted for being the first, and probably only, class to get the Guru intoxicated during class time. You see, it was his saint's day. I brought in two Greek bar glasses I had picked up during my travels and another student (No names, no pack drill) brought in a fifth of Metaxas Greek brandy. And, what with one thing and another, Callimahos got not drunk, but distinctly tiddly.

3. "For what three events is December 16 famous?"

(U) Upon graduation, we became members of the Dundee Society. We had to return our Dundee Marmalade jars because the Dundee Marmalade Company had quit using ceramic jars and had shifted to glass. The Guru wanted to preserve the ceramic ones for future classes so we had to find our own jars. My glass one lasted about five years before someone stole it. Callimahos told us that when he was trying to arrange a graduation lunch for one of the firstclasses, the Officers' Club asked for the name of the organization, the marmalade jar on his desk caught his eye, and the Society was christened.

(U) The only purpose of the society was to have a luncheon after every class to welcome in

new members. Between its founding and the last CA-400 class, 285 expert cryptanalysts became members of Dundee. There were also, over the years, eleven honorary members, starting with Dr. Louis W. Tordella in 1968. He was followed by five directors and one deputy director of NSA, two directors of CIA, two congressmen, and two "Honorables." In order: Lt Gen Marshall S. Carter, USA; VADM Noel Gayler, USN; The Hon. Robert F. Froehlke; The Hon. Albert C. Hall; LGEN Samuel S. Phillips, USAF; LGEN Lew Allen, Jr., USAF; The Hon. William E. Colby; Benson K. Buffham, Esq.; ADM Stansfield Turner, USN; and VADM B. R. Inman, USN.

(U) The Guru died in 1977, and the last session of CA-400 was Class No. 34 in 1979.

4. "Describe Jean Francois Champollion's eyes."

(U) I have been told that there may be some who don't know the answers to the above questions. I find this difficult to believe; but, for the culturally deprived:

1. "What is the plural of Sphinx?" Sphinges (with a long 'e')
2. "What instrument did Frederic Chopin's father play, and in what business was he that left him stranded in Warsaw?" Chopin Sr. played the flute and was in Warsaw selling snuff.
3. "For what three events is December 16 famous?" It is the birthday of Ludwig van Beethoven, Lambros D. Callimahos, and Salvo Salassio, the dictator of Zendia.
4. "Describe Jean Francois Champollion's eyes." One was blue, one brown.

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